

COMMENDING REP. GONZALEZ'S
CONGRESSIONAL LEADERSHIP

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 1, 2011

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the service of Congressman CHARLES GONZALEZ. I am sad that after seven great terms in the House, Congressman CHARLES GONZALEZ will not be seeking reelection. Picking right up from where his father left off, CHARLES has been a tremendous leader for the people of the Texas 20th Congressional District and the United States.

CHARLES and I share the honor of representing large Hispanic communities. As the Chairman of the Hispanic Caucus and his tenure in Congress, he has fought fiercely to better the lives of all Hispanics in America. We both proudly co-sponsored the DREAM Act. We both share the belief that everyone in America deserves the equal opportunity to pursue the American Dream.

CHARLES and his compassion will be greatly missed. I wish him and his family all the best and more.

REGARDING THE IMPRISONMENT OF ALAN GROSS

HON. HENRY A. WAXMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 1, 2011

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with deep concern over the plight of an American citizen overseas. Today marks two years that Alan Gross, a 62-year old international development specialist who has worked for over two decades helping people in troubled areas across the globe, has been held in a Cuban prison.

For the first fourteen months of his captivity, Mr. Gross was held without charge. In February of this year, he was charged with "acts to undermine the integrity and independence" of the State, then given a two-day trial and sentenced to 15 years in prison, his appeal denied.

Mr. Gross was in Cuba on behalf of USAID. He was there to help the country's small Jewish community establish an intranet and improve its access to the internet. His presence and actions were not meant to pose a threat or danger to the Cuban government. Since being incarcerated, he has lost approximately 100 pounds, his health is deteriorating, and two immediate family members, his mother and daughter, have been diagnosed with cancer.

His 15-year sentence is absurd, and his continuing incarceration is inhumane. I urge my colleagues to join me in requesting that the Cuban government release Mr. Gross on humanitarian grounds as quickly as is possible.

67TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
BATTLE OF COLMAR POCKET

HON. GEOFF DAVIS

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 1, 2011

Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the upcoming 67th anniversary of the Battle of Colmar Pocket.

The Battle of the Colmar Pocket was fought between January 22 and February 9, 1945, to liberate the last major French city occupied by the German Army. The ferocious preliminary fighting which formed the Colmar Pocket began after the arrival of U.S. 7th Army and 1st French Army forces at Strasbourg, north of Colmar, on November 23rd and Mulhouse, south of Colmar on November 25th, 1944. These Armies, under command of the 6th Army Group under Lieutenant General Jacob L. Devers, had fought their way through the Vosges Mountains to reach these cities beginning in mid-September, and were the first military force in history to successfully do so.

The 1st French Army, commanded by General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny, had the mission to clear the Pocket and liberate Colmar, destroying the German forces in the Pocket or driving their remainder across the Rhine. Initially, the 36th Infantry Division, under Major General John Dahlquist, arrived at Selestat on December 4, 1944, fixing the northern shoulder of the Pocket. Under French command, the 36th Infantry Division fought its way south to the vicinity of Kayersberg, Ostheim, Mittelwihr, and Bennwihr, in frigid winter weather, where the division fought off fanatical German counterattacks launched in support of the German Ardennes Offensive, the Battle of the Bulge. In mid-December this stalwart division was withdrawn from the Colmar sector to rest and refurbish after its long, debilitating campaign through the Vosges. For the fighting to collapse the Pocket, two 36th Infantry Division soldiers received the Medal of Honor, Sergeant Ellis R. Weicht and T/SGT Bernard P. Bell.

Major General Iron Mike O'Daniel's 3rd Infantry Division then under acting Division Commander Brigadier General Robert N. Young, which had also fought its way as part of 7th Army through the Vosges Mountains to Strasbourg, was attached to II Corps of the 1st French Army under Major General Aime de Goisard de Monsabert, and in mid-December continued the fight to collapse the northern section of the Pocket, seizing Kayersberg, Sigolsheim, Mittelwihr, and Bennwihr and the dominating high ground of Hill 355 above Sigolsheim and Hill 216 outside Bennwihr in the final two weeks of December 1944. For their intrepid and gallant actions in the fighting between December 15 and January 21, 1945, the following 3rd Infantry Division soldiers were awarded the Medal of Honor: 1LT Charles P. Murray, Jr.; 1LT Eli Whitely; LTC Keith L. Ware; T/SGT Gus Kefurt; and T/SGT Russell Dunham.

As this difficult fighting was taking place, other 1st French Army units were pressing remaining German units in the Vosges Mountains at the westernmost extent of the Pocket, as well as in the south near Mulhouse. The tough fighting and harsh winter weather had greatly worn down the French, and it was determined further U.S. reinforcement was need-

ed to enable our valiant allies to finally collapse the Pocket. The first to arrive were the soldiers of Major General Norman D. Cota's 28th Infantry Division, which had fought hard in the Bulge. They arrived on January 19th, taking over the 3rd Infantry Division's sector in the Kayersberg valley.

On January 22nd, the 3rd Infantry Division, now under MG O'Daniel, with attached 254th Infantry Regiment of the 63rd Infantry Division and reinforced by a combat command of the 5th French Armored Division, launched the II Corps main effort to breach enemy defenses protecting the Colmar Canal and to isolate Colmar from the Rhine River by seizing the bridge at Neuf-Brisach. January 22nd found then Lieutenant Colonel Lloyd B. Ramsey from Somerset, Kentucky, in command of the 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry. He had commanded the battalion since taking command in the Anzio beach head in February 1944, and had commanded it for Operation Dragoon, the invasion of Southern France, the Southern France campaign, and through the Vosges. Leading his battalion across the ill River, through minefields against dug-in enemy machine gun positions south of the village of Guemar in a night attack, Ramsey showed outstanding leadership and gallantry which led to the award of the Silver Star. Despite being wounded by enemy shell fragments, he ensured his battalion continued advancing in the face of stubborn resistance, breaking through the enemy positions and enabling the rest of the division to drive south.

Ramsey would continue his sterling combat service and go on to achieve the rank of Major General, and commanded the AMERICAL Division in Vietnam from 1969 until 1970. He was severely injured in a helicopter crash in Vietnam and eventually was forced to retire for medical reasons in 1974. MG Ramsey is a proud son of Kentucky, and a member of the University of Kentucky Hall of Fame.

The 3rd Infantry Division's dogged attack and imaginative scheme of maneuver enabled it to reach and cross the Colmar Canal the night of January 29-30 after a week of very heavy fighting. This combat included a serious incident at the bridge across 111 at the Maison Rouge where the failure of the bridge resulted in isolated battalions of the 30th and 15th Infantry Regiments defending unsupported against severe enemy armored counterattacks. For actions during January 22nd through the 26th, two Medals of Honor would be awarded to 3rd Infantry Division soldiers, PFC Jose F. Valdez and 2LT Audie L. Murphy.

The XXI Corps, commanded by Major General Frank W. Milburn, took command of the 3rd Infantry Division, the 28th Infantry Division, the 75th Infantry Division commanded by Major General Roy E. Porter, the 5th French Armored Division, and the 12th Armored Division commanded by Major General Roderick C. Allen at the end of January and continued the attack which succeeded in the 3rd Infantry Division's seizure of Neuf-Brisach. The 75th Infantry Division attacked and protected the 3rd Infantry Division's west flank. The 28th Infantry Division launched its attack from the Kayersberg valley and cleared the suburbs of Colmar, enabling units of the French 5th Armored Division to enter the city on February 2nd. Immediately thereafter, the 12th Armored Division was committed for a drive south and